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A Cabinet for the Democrats

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With a sense of duty done, I have chosen senior officials for the next administration. Should the nation choose a Democrat, who certainly will be too tired to choose for himself.

Secretary of State. The world is a terrible place, and just the place for Bob Strauss. The stricken field of diplomacy is still littered with the broken remains of those who dealt with him as special trade ambassador. When he was special envoy to the Middle East he did not use an office in the State Department, which suggests a healthy suspicion of the place. Strauss can restore mystery and a sense of the exotic to diplomacy: he has a thicker accent than Kissinger and is less straightforward.

Defense. Scoop Jackson came to Washington the year I was born (1941) and has seen every evolution of strategic doctrine in the nuclear age. There is no procurement problem he has not seen. The benighted public considered him a dull presidential candidate. Actually, he is just calm. He will come in handy in a crisis.

CIA. Lane Kirkland, head of the AFL-CIO, or, better, his wife, Irena. Both were born in nations that hunger for independence, she in Czechoslovakia, he in South Carolina. Perhaps she is too tough: there are some things not even I would do to communists. He represents the Democratic foreign-policy tradition that was overthrown in 1972. Its restoration in the party could be the most important result of 1984.

OMB. As chairman of the Budget Committee, Rep. James Jones of Tulsa knows the grim facts and would be able to do what Stockman did: get an administration off to a fast start. Someone had better. By January 1985, the red ink will be hip high and rising; the recovery will be drowning in it. By August 1985, the chance for sensible action may have passed. Jones knows that two divisive things—tax increases and entitlement reforms—are inescapable.

Treasury. Felix Rohatyn, investment banker, fears more apocalypses than actually are scheduled, but he has what a treasury secretary needs: a lively sense of apprehension. His experience coping with New York City's financial crisis prepared him to deal with debtor nations. Regarding domestic policy, he bubbles with new ideas (and old ones: he favors a reconstruction fi-

nance corporation), but nobody's perfect.

Chairman, Council of Economic Advisers. NEWSWEEK's loss will be the republic's gain when Lester Thurow is in Washington, spreading skepticism about economic orthodoxies and puncturing cant about "industrial policy." (He rightly says the nation has had some form of industrial policy since the government started building canals.)

Attorney General. There is no job in government that Edward Bennett Williams could not do with distinction. He declined President Ford's offer to make him CIA director, but life cannot be all baseball (he owns the Orioles) and a law practice (he is the most formidable lawyer in Washington, which has a few).

Agriculture. Farmers, the most produc-

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tive Americans, are carrying this country and are suffering because of their excellence. Working with his friend Strauss, Dwayne Andreas, head of Archer Daniels Midland agriprocessing company, can help expand international markets, turning farm surpluses into more of an asset for the economy and less of a disaster for the budget.

Interior. Rep. Mo Udall loves chipmunks and wilderness and all that good stuff. Also, he is a Westerner and a sponsor of the Central Arizona Project, so he knows the politics and science of water, the resource issue of the late 1980s. (Never mind "high tech" and "merit pay." If you want to be up to date, learn how to say "Ogallala aquifer.")

Energy. Charles Curtis, former chairman of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, will not be a well-known cabinet member . . . until someone closes the Strait of Hormuz or until current surpluses abate, as they will. Then there will be pressures to regulate everything, pressures Curtis could moderate.

Health and Human Services. The Repub-

lican Party needs a Vernon Jordan. The way to make the Vernon Jordan a Republican is to sentence him to this department. He will soon see what makes Republicans inveigh against the tangle of domestic programs. His most pressing problem will be containing health costs. Then he can try to say and do what needs saying and doing about the most dismaying domestic problem, the disintegration of black families.

Housing and Urban Development. Henry Cisneros, San Antonio's 36-year-old Hispanic mayor, understands (having experienced) upward mobility, for municipalities as well as individuals. His city's recent growth derives from local assets, natural and planned.

Education. Diane Ravitch, author of "The Troubled Crusade: American Education, 1945-1980" (out in September) will not try to reinvent the wheel. She knows every intellectual fad that has faded, and what has been learned. For example: keep social scientists on short leashes.

Labor. Having been head of New York City's transit system, Richard Ravitch has seen the worst that life can throw at him, so he can use his spare time to help his wife tame the National Education Association.

Commerce. Would you want your child to grow up to become secretary of commerce? But someone has to be, and Peter McCollough, chairman of Xerox, could teach Democrats to love commerce.

Transportation. Having rescued Chrysler (and, more important, reinvented the convertible) Lee Iacocca's turbo-charged temperament should be focused on the auto industry and auto safety. Besides, it would be good to have him at the cabinet-table to snort disrespectfully when anyone gets too pious about that fiction "free trade."

U.N. Ambassador. Sen. Christopher Dodd is so fond of the Third World he deserves a chance to enjoy the company of its representatives.

White House Chief of Staff. Harry McPherson worked for LBJ so perhaps he has suffered enough. But he has learned what government experience teaches: what won't work. A lawyer and author of a superb memoir, "A Political Education," his return to the White House would at least result in another fine memoir. How many appointees give the nation as much?